

EERF Steering Group: Minutes

4 November 2010 at 2.00 pm

NFU Offices, Newmarket

Present

Pat Holtom (Chairman & Norfolk)
Suzanne Harris (Vice Chairman & Essex)
Martin Collison (Vice Chairman & L&S Subgroup)
Frances Bedding (Suffolk)
Anne Marie Hamilton (Bedfordshire)
John Simmons (EEDA)
David Wood (Secretariat)

Apologies

Martin Aust (Housing Subgroup)
Kate Belinis (Hertfordshire)
Kirsten Bennett (Cambridgeshire)
Mick Carr (GO East)
Nicola Lloyd (CRC)

1. Review of meeting on Big Society

Everyone felt that the meeting had gone very well with good attendance, active discussions and engaged debate.

2. Minutes of meeting on 8 September 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September were **agreed**.

3. Actions and matters arising not on Agenda

RAE SLA for 2010/11

Steering Group **noted** that the final revision (version 5) had been agreed and signed by Pat and GOE.

4. Secretariat Update and Budget

David presented the latest status of the budget available, expected expenditure for this year and the opportunities for the Forum to stage further events.

The Group **agree** to make maximum use of the available funds to stage another members' event and to progress the Action Plan component of the Rural White Paper.

5. Regional Rural White Paper

The Group **noted** the additional work by Collison Associates to produce the Summary version of the RWP.

The RWP had been well received. It was **agreed** that the Action Plan must be written and distributed before the end of the current financial year. This was key to driving forward the recommendations with clearly defined actions defined collaboratively with organizations key for their delivery.

It was **agreed** to hold three consultation events to capture ideas and commitment for actions. These would be designed as positive opportunities to support delivery of effective and constructive responses to the current austerity measures and financial cuts. The three events would follow a common format and have parallel discussions on the main topics of the RWP,

viz economic growth; broadband and telephony services; housing; skills; and access to services. (These also aligned with the Defra priorities.)

Action Point: **David** to book three venues for events convenient for attendees from N/S/C, E/H and C/B/H.

Action Point: **David** to send alert before end November to individuals and organizations to reserve dates for events.

Action Point: **ALL** to send names of extra individuals and organizations that should be invited to Action Plan events.

Martin Collison left the room.

The Group discussed how best to achieve the drafting of the Action Plan. David stated that RAE did not have the resource nor necessarily the depth of knowledge to carry out the task and recommended that an external consultant be appointed for the task. Given the likely cost would be less than £5000, the Group **noted** that a full competitive tendering exercise would not be necessary. Based on the criteria that the Action Plan must be finished and ready for distribution before 31st March 2010 ('time is of the essence'), it was unanimously **agreed** (secretariat not voting) to request Collison Associates to quote for the work because of its knowledge and involvement in RWP to date; experience and track record of carrying out similar work to high standards; and knowledge and contacts within the EE.

Martin Collison rejoined the meeting and was informed of the desire of the Steering Group for Collison Associates to facilitate consultation events and to draft the Action Plan. Martin expressed his willingness to carry out the work and confirmed its ability to meet the deadlines for its completion.

Action Point: **David** to make the necessary contractual arrangements with Collison Associates for services to draft the RWP Action Plan

6. EERF Development

National Network of Forum Chairs

The Group noted and **approved** the draft response by the secretariat to the Defra questionnaire. The Group had some difficulty in understanding both the thrust of the questions and the use Defra would make of them. It was surprised at the lack of social, economic and community topics within the questions.

7. EERF Planning

The Steering Group **agreed** that the next regular meeting would be on 9th March and this would include the AGM. Given the other RWP Action Events, it was **agreed** that there was no need nor was it practical for an additional conference.

It was decided that the meeting on 9 March would be at NFU Offices again because of its convenient central location. It would pick up from the RWP the theme of "Demographic Change and implications for rural communities".

The meeting should pick up on migrants, youth and older people and for all these, issues around homes, employment and skills. Ivan Annibal was considered a good choice to introduce topic, picking up migrants workers issues.

Action Point: **David** to invite Ivan Annibal of Rose Consultants to be a speaker.

The meeting discussed other ideas such as inviting individuals as case studies to describe their personal experiences; Young Farmers 'Brains trust/Live debate'; and contributions from Princes' Trust.

Action Point: **Anne-Marie** to send David contact information on David Morgan of Princes Trust

Action Point: **Suzanne** to send David information on youth contribution and potential young couple case study personal experiences.

Action Point: **Pat / Martin** to send David contact information for Francesco Broom (?) regarding Norfolk YFC

8. DONM & AOB

The Steering Group **agreed** to meet on **18th January 2011** and probably at GOE, Eastbrook.

There being no other business, the meeting **closed**.